



Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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Western Washington target of state gypsy moth summer trapping program

OLYMPIA – The annual hunt for invading gypsy moths in Washington state is underway. Between now and mid-July, 18,600 cardboard gypsy moth traps will be placed throughout 19 counties in Western Washington by Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) seasonal employees. San Juan County, with 100 traps, will get the smallest number. King County, with 3,600 traps, will receive the most traps.

Traps will not be placed in Eastern Washington this year since no gypsy moths have been caught there since 1999. Plans call for trapping in Eastern Washington on a limited basis every other year.

The orange or green A-frame traps now being placed measure 7-by-5-by-4 inches. Inside each trap is a female scent lure that attracts male moths for up to a mile away. Once inside the trap, it gets stuck on a very sticky substance.

The gypsy moth is one of the most destructive insects ever introduced into the U.S. In its caterpillar form, it eats large amounts of leaves during May and June each year, feeding on more than 500 species of trees and shrubs. The moth causes millions of dollars of environmental and economic damage in infested areas in 18 states in the East and upper Midwest.

Most Washington traps will be placed at a density of one trap per square mile. A higher density will be placed along ports and waterways and areas where gypsy moths were caught last year.

Washington has no permanent populations of gypsy moths because of an aggressive summer trapping program, which identifies where gypsy moth activity is occurring around the state, followed by a spring eradication program in areas where infestations are detected.

Since 1974, the year that the first gypsy moth was discovered in Washington, every infestation has been successfully eradicated.

The 18,600 traps will be placed throughout the state, by county, as follows: King, 3,600; Pierce, 2,200; Lewis, 2,000; Snohomish, 1,300; Clark, 1,000; Cowlitz, 1,000; Kitsap, 1,000; Clallam, 950; Thurston, 900; Whatcom, 900; Skagit, 750; Grays Harbor, 650; Island, 550; Jefferson, 500; Mason, 500; Pacific, 250; Wahkiakum, 250; Skamania, 200; and San Juan, 100.

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Eight ports on Puget Sound, one in Grays Harbor, and three on the Columbia will be heavily trapped because gypsy moths often arrive on ships from foreign countries. The eight ports being trapped on Puget Sound are Port Angeles, Port Townsend, Bellingham, Anacortes, Everett, Seattle, Tacoma and Olympia. The three ports being trapped on the Columbia River are Kalama, Longview and Vancouver.

Background of the gypsy moth

The gypsy moth is a small moth with a wing span of about one and a half inches. The female moth is white with brown markings. The male, which is slightly smaller, is tan with brown markings.

There are two kinds of gypsy moths, the European and the Asian. The Asian variety is a much greater threat to Washington state than the European variety because it eats evergreen as well as deciduous trees and, unlike the European female, the Asian female can fly. This flight capability means that an Asian infestation can spread more quickly and much further.

Details of trapping program

Twenty-eight seasonal employees of WSDA are placing the traps and will check them every two to three weeks between July and September to determine if any moths have been caught. The traps will be removed in September.

If moths are caught, more traps will be placed in the area to try and pinpoint the center of the infestation.

Depending on the number and location of moths caught, and other evidence of gypsy moth activity in the area, some sites where moths are caught may be treated next spring to eliminate the infestation.

This past spring, for example, 560 acres in Vader and 16.5 acres of the Crown Hill neighborhood in Seattle were treated for the European gypsy moth with a biological insecticide. The Vader treatment was applied by helicopter and the Crown Hill treatment by ground spray equipment.

Persons with questions on the summer trapping program may call the toll-free state Department of Agriculture hotline at 1-800-443-6684; or visit the department's Web site at www.wa.gov/agr/gypsy.htm.

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